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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 002804

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/LOGGERFO

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [PHUM](#)
SUBJECT: MGGZ01 - ISRAELI GAZA INCURSION - JERUSALEM JULY 3
SITREP

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) A statement on July 3 by groups claiming responsibility for the kidnapping of IDF corporal Gilad Shalit threatened that the abduction would be a "closed case" if Palestinian prisoners are not released by 0600 on July 4; they did not elaborate on their statement. IDF forces entered northern Gaza on July 3 in small numbers; their mission is reportedly to find tunnels and target those firing Qassam rockets. The IDF continues to widen its footprint in southern Gaza, according to remarks made to the press by the Golani brigade commander. In the West Bank, the IDF continues its raids of Hamas-affiliated organizations. Some Gaza crossings with Israel were open on July 2 to permit the passage of food, medicine, and fuel. Over 90 American citizens in Gaza have asked for US assistance in leaving the area, and Post continues to work with Embassy Tel Aviv and the GOI on the issue.

Political and Kidnapping Update

¶2. (C) Press reports on the morning of July 3 say that the groups claiming responsibility for the kidnapping of IDF corporal Gilad Shalit have given the GOI until 0600 on July 4 to release Palestinian prisoners, or they will consider the abduction a "closed case," without elaborating on the implications of that statement. The issue of prisoners continues to resonate with the Palestinian public; over the weekend, President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) told the press: "My main concern is the issue of prisoners, because there are more than 10,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. Some of these have been imprisoned by Israel for more than 15 years and what concerns us now is to get them out of that darkness and into the light of freedom."

¶3. (C) Both Palestinian and Israeli press carried photos of Abu Mazen and Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyyah visiting the office of the prime minister recently bombed by the IAF. Abu Mazen called the strike a "criminal act" and Palestinian interlocutors have focused on the office as representing Palestinians, not simply Hamas.

¶4. (U) Prime Minister Haniyyah announced the temporary reassignment of Hamas ministers to run the ministries of those currently held by the GOI; details septel.

¶5. (SBU) Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri denounced

statements made by President Bush calling for the release of Shalit as a way of ending the crisis, calling this statement "incitement." Abu Zuhri released a statement making accusations that "This U.S. administration supports Israeli terrorism and war crimes against the Palestinian people. It is constantly engaged in efforts to blockade and besiege the Palestinian people and incites others to collectively punish and isolate the Palestinian people. These actions of George Bush make him an evil leader and the primary sponsor of terrorism in the world today."

Military Update

¶6. (C) Palestinian and Israeli press report an IDF incursion in small numbers into northern Gaza, in and around the town of Beit Hanoun. Press reports indicate the mission of the IDF is to find tunnels, prevent laying of explosives against the border fence, and conduct operations against Qassam missile launchers. The IDF has reportedly not entered into populated areas, although they have apparently taken over several buildings to use as observation points. IAF aircraft also struck three sites in Gaza during the evening of July 2, including a strike against a Fatah-affiliated charitable association in Gaza City that resulted in one person lightly wounded.

¶7. (C) The "Jerusalem Post" quotes the IDF Golani Brigade Commander, operating in southern Gaza, as saying that IDF troops in southern Gaza are taking control of additional territory daily and predicting that the Brigade's operations would expand to other parts of Gaza. There was an exchange of gunfire on July 2 near the Rafah airport in which two Palestinian gunmen were reportedly killed by IDF gunfire; newspaper accounts say that the gunmen were wearing suicide belts.

¶8. (C) In the West Bank, the IDF continues to raid organizations associated with Hamas. The Israeli press quotes Hamas spokesman Abu Ubaida as threatening to target Israeli schools, institutions, and power plants if the IDF continues air strikes against infrastructure in Gaza.

Humanitarian Update

¶9. (SBU) The local Palestinian press July 2 and 3 carried stories quoting the Israeli Defense Ministry that Karni/al-Mintar and Nahal Oz crossings would be open for four days this week and that 150 trucks would be able to transfer their cargo through the Karni/al-Mintar crossing each day. While the Karni/al-Mintar crossing has not yet opened for business July 3, it was open for five hours July 2 and approximately 100 trucks crossed, according to PalTrade Gaza-based employee Muhammed Skaik. Per Skaik and USAID-based Gaza field staff, cargo included:

- 15 truckloads of fruits and vegetables;
- one truckload of 39 tons of wheat;
- 6 truckloads of basic food supplies, including wheat flour (88 tons), sugar (79 tons), and cooking oil (19 tons);
- 14 truckloads of dairy products and frozen foods;
- 15 truckloads of animal feed;
- 1 truckload of diesel fuel for UNRWA (35,000 tons); and
- 43 trucks of various products, including 15 trucks which had been stuck in Karni for ten days since the last closure.

¶10. (SBU) The Nahal Oz crossing was open July 2 for fuel deliveries and again July 3. According to PalTrade, on July 2 the following quantities had been imported:

- 942,000 liters of diesel;
- 114,000 liters of gasoline; and
- 198 tons of cooking gas.

Senior PA officials commented that fuel supplies have been allowed into Gaza, but that the quantity is only sufficient for 48 hours.

AMCIT Update

¶11. (C) The number of Amcits requesting assistance to leave the Gaza Strip has increased to over 90. COGAT authorities at Erez have not yet given permission and indicate they would prefer the Amcits leave in small groups over a period of time. Post continues to press for permits for the entire group to move ASAP. The Consulate is also working with Embassy Amman to facilitate their expeditious departure to Jordan.

WALLES